

~~TOP SECRET~~

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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC-01823-88
17 May 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Charles E. Allen
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

SUBJECT: Support to State Department - Possible Chemical Attacks on
Iran or Iraq Capital [REDACTED]

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1. Attached is a warning paper forwarded to the Department of State in response to a request from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security for a written assessment of the likelihood that either Iran or Iraq will resort to chemical attacks on the other's capital. There is Community consensus that the likelihood of such an attack is small, but that the potential exists and may be increasing. [REDACTED]

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2. The Department asked for a statement in writing because of internal discussions following a 28 April briefing at State by a member of my staff. Initially, there were differences between Diplomatic Security and the Bureau for Near East/South Asian Affairs over whether US dependents should be withdrawn or whether other steps should be taken to protect US personnel there. [REDACTED]

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3. The issue now appears to be resolved, however. The Department is planning to send a joint State/Defense technical team to Baghdad to survey the US Embassy for possible installation of a chemical alarm system and suitability of other countermeasures (e.g., portable shelter, masks, suits, awareness briefings, etc.). We will keep you informed of further developments. [REDACTED]

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Charles E. Allen
NIO for Warning

Attachment:
Warning Issue

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DISSEMINATION CONTROL ABBREVIATIONS

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|--------------------|---|
| NOFORN- | Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals |
| NOCONTRACT- | Not Releasable to Contractors or Contractor/Consultants |
| PROPIN- | Caution-Proprietary Information Involved |
| ORCON- | Dissemination and Extraction of Information Controlled by Originator |
| REL . . .- | This Information has been Authorized for Release to . . . |

National Intelligence Council

National Intelligence Officer for Warning

13 May 1988

WARNING ISSUE

IRAN/IRAQ: Chemical Attacks on Cities?

The NIO for Warning is concerned over the possibility that either Iran or Iraq will initiate chemical attacks on the other's capital and that the victimized country will retaliate in kind.

While the likelihood of either side resorting to chemical attacks on principal cities is assessed by the Intelligence Community to be small--the retaliatory capability of each providing a significant deterrent--the potential for this low probability, but high impact, event exists. We are unlikely to have warning of imminent attack.

Several factors and recent events prevent us from ruling out the possibility of chemical attacks in which Western diplomats and other civilians could be at risk, including:

- o Extensive recent battlefield use of chemical munitions;
- o Muted world response to the deaths of perhaps several thousand Kurdish non-combatants in March, which has left the impression of low international political cost arising from such attacks;
- o The "war of the cities" using ballistic missiles--now in ceasefire after more than 200 total strikes;
- o Evidence that Iran is preparing its people for chemical attacks; and
- o Unknowns about what is driving the decisionmaking of the two sides: Iraq has behaved in an uncharacteristically decisive and aggressive way of late; and we know that there is a heated debate in Tehran over how to respond to recent military setbacks. Should radicals prevail, they might opt for escalation by retaliating with chemical attacks against Iraqi cities.

Both governments have chemical capable delivery systems. Iran has 125 and 250 kilogram bombs containing mustard and cyanide that can be delivered by F-4 and F-5 aircraft. Iraqi aircraft last bombed Tehran with conventional weapons in late February, an action that led directly to the missile war of the

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cities. They also have bombs up to 500 kilograms for delivering mustard and nerve agents from Soviet or French-built aircraft.

Iran might realize that in such an exchange it would suffer disproportionately, while Iraq would have more difficulty denying chemical attacks of Iranian cities than it has had in deflecting allegations of chemical use on the battlefield. Nevertheless, as more nations acquire a chemical capability, the threat of either intentional or unintentional exposure of large civilian population centers to chemical attack increases, especially in areas such as Iran and Iraq, where a demonstrated willingness to use both chemicals and long-range delivery systems are present.

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Warning Issue

FROM: Charles E. Allen
NIO/Warning
7B 42 Headquarters

EXTENSION

NO.

NIC-01823-88

DATE

17 May 1988

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TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

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OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1. VC/NIC

17 May

17 May

Dg

3 → 9: Bob.

We worked this issue over pretty carefully, and I'm satisfied that we got the right tone.

Phil

2.

3. C/NIC

18 May 88

DE.

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5. DDI Registry

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LOGGED

6.

7. Executive Registry

18 MAY 1988

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(9 May)

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